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SBDC Helps Young Entrepreneur Make Miracles Come True

FAIRMONT - When you first meet Anita Johnson the first thing you notice is her warm infectious smile. She has every reason to smile. Johnson is the owner of a very successful small business, Miracle Nails & Boutique, located on Walnut Street in Fairmont, and really enjoys what she is doing.

Johnson, although young in years at age 25, is a seasoned small business owner, having started her own business at the young age of 20.

“I had always dreamed of owning my own business and knew early in life that I wanted to be a nail technician,” said Johnson.

In fact, she began doing nails while in seventh grade and started doing acrylics in high school. She didn’t waste any time as well obtaining the needed certifications to become a nail technician. “I had graduated from high school on a Friday and started at the Clarksburg Beauty Academy the following Tuesday,” Johnson said.

Once graduated and certified, she started working as a licensed manicurist at a local nail shop, honing her skills and building a client base. The experience she earned there convinced her that she could run her own business.

But, in order to become a small business owner, she needed a few things, a good business plan and financing. That’s when she visited the Fairmont State Small Business Development Center (SBDC).

“The support and encouragement I received from Jack Kirby at the SBDC not only helped me start my business, but was also very instrumental in my rapid success,” stated Johnson. “They helped me put together a business plan and helped get the funding I needed to start my business.”

The SBDC recommended Anita to the Institute for Entrepreneurship out of Albany, NY which resulted in her being featured on the MTV “Be The Boss” tour. The tour showcased 32 young entrepreneurs from across the country and was a great experience for the young small business owner.

“It was a fun experience for me with all the cameras and microphones,” said Johnson. “It was a really laid back interview where we talked about my business.”

The recognition and honors didn’t stop with the MTV production. The SBDC also nominated Anita for the U.S. Small Business Administration’s Young Entrepreneur of the Year award in 2001.

“That was a great experience and honor for me,” adds Johnson. “I traveled to Charleston and received the award from the Governor in front of my family and other small business winners throughout the state.”

Johnson picked up the name for her business from her church family at the Miracle Revival Center, which was started by her late father, Donald Johnson, and is presently pastured by her mother, Johnnie M. Johnson-Miller. “My father started the Miracle Revival Center and we’ve used the Miracle name with everything we do as a family,” stated Johnson.

She also isn’t resting on her laurels. Johnson recently added a boutique to her business, which also relocated across the street from her initial location. “I’ve always considered expanding the business and a boutique made sense,” said Johnson. “Because I do artificial nail applications, manicures, pedicures and paraffin wax treatments a majority of my clients are women. They’ll now be able to also shop for clothing, shoes, designer handbags, belts, jewelry and special order baskets. It’s a ‘One-Stop Shop’ that caters to women.”

Johnson also loves what she does and being her own boss. “I absolutely love my clients,” said Johnson. “They’re just like family. We laugh, cry and enjoy each other. The only thing I don’t like about being in business is turning clients away. I’ve build up my client base early on and really can’t work anyone in.”

When asked for advice for others wanting to start their own business, Johnson is quick to respond, “First of all, you need to pray about it. You need to establish a good client base of customers, and be able to devote lots of time and capital.”

Sounds like great advice. It seems to have worked great for her.

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